

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus for washing items, comprising;

a generally cylindrical mesh housing;

a first wall and a second wall, said first wall and said second wall being positioned within said housing so as to define first, second and third compartments in said housing;

an opening in each of said compartments through which an item to be washed can be placed in or removed from a respective compartment; and

a closure device for closing said compartments to retain said items in said compartments when said items are being washed.

2. The apparatus claim 1, wherein said first wall and said second wall each comprise a polymer loop which stiffens said first wall and said second wall.

3. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said first wall and said second wall are disposed perpendicularly to a longitudinal axis of said housing.

4. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said first wall and said second wall each comprise an endless pocket and a stiffener disposed within said pocket.

5. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a circular end panel at each end of said housing, said end panels each having an endless pocket and a stiffener disposed within said pocket.

6. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said closure device comprises at least one of a zipper, a fabric fastener, a snap or a catch, for each compartment.

7. The apparatus of claim 6, wherein said closure device is a zipper having plastic teeth.

8. The apparatus of claim 1, having a fully extended length of no greater than approximately 18 inches.

9. The apparatus of claim 1, having a diameter of approximately 6 inches.

10. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said generally cylindrical mesh housing has a first cylindrical portion and a second cylindrical portion, and a closure device for releasably connecting said first cylindrical portion and said second cylindrical portion.

11. The apparatus of claim 10, further comprising a circular end panel at each end of said housing, said end panels each having an endless pocket and a stiffener disposed within said pocket.

12. The apparatus of claim 11, further comprising a connecting member for connecting a first of said end

panels, said first cylindrical portion, said second cylindrical portion, and a second of said end panels.

13. The apparatus of claim 12, wherein said connecting members comprises a fabric.

14. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein said fabric is folded and secured to an inside surface of each of said first end panel, said first cylindrical portion, said second cylindrical portion, and said second end panel.

15. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein fabric comprises a folded strip.

16. The apparatus of claim 15, wherein said folded strip is sewn to an interior portion of each of said first end panel, said first cylindrical portion, said second cylindrical portion, and said second end panel.

17. A method of washing at least one item comprising:

placing the item in at least one compartment of a generally cylindrical apparatus having mesh walls through which water may flow to wash the item;

placing the apparatus in a washing environment;

washing the items in the washing environment;

removing the apparatus from the washing environment;

permitting the item to dry.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein the washing environment is a washing machine.

19. The method of claim 17, wherein the washing environment is a disinfecting or sterilizing environment.